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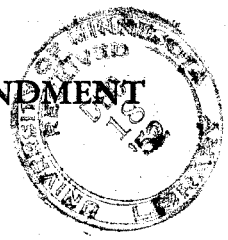

ELECTORAL REFORM — THE COUDERT AMENDMENT

By J. HARVIE WILLIAMS

Two significant facts of first importance underline current headlines — the election of a President and Vice President next Monday and a proposed change in the system of election to those high offices which, if adopted, will produce a revolutionary effect on American politics for years to come.

On Monday next, the 15th, Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon will be elected, respectively, President and Vice President of the United States. On that day "the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December", according to law under the Constitution, the *Electors* who were elected last November 4 will meet "in their respective States" and "vote by ballot for President and Vice President". This event occurs as clamor for reform of the so-called "Electoral College" mounts. One reform amendment to the Constitution passed the Senate in the 81st Congress, only to be killed in the House. Rising discussion and agitation suggest that the next session of Congress may see a major operation on the electoral process.

Congressman Frederic R. Coudert, Jr., of New York's 17th District, in the past week has announced that he will urge a Constitutional amendment to rectify the inadequacies of the present system of electing Electors — and therefore of electing Presidents.

Mr. Coudert unveils his proposal (which undoubtedly will be the principal plan to be considered by Congress) with too much modesty. Actually, what he proposes is, in effect, a revolutionary change in the method of choosing Presidents. For, it will eliminate the over-weighted predominance of the big-city states in this process — a predominance which has enabled the New and Fair Deals to run the country despite the opposition of a substantial majority of the people. In short, Mr. Coudert proposes to return the power to *all* of the people, by properly dividing it among them.

The political problem to be solved was described to the House Judiciary Committee by Dr. Ruth C. Silva, Associate Professor of Political Science at Pennsylvania State College, in this way:

> "In recent years the general ticket system of choosing Presidential electors (that is, electing them in a bloc on the statewide ticket) has compelled both parties to nominate Presidential candidates who advocate policies designed to win the votes of conscious ethnic, religious, and economic groups in metropolitan centers, where these minorities hold the balance of power in populous States

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with large blocs of electoral votes. . . . On the other hand, the Congress is elected in a constituency that makes Congressional support for such a program unlikely, for a majority of Senators and Representatives are elected in smaller cities, towns, suburban and rural areas."

The present at-large system of electing Electors is in effect the unit rule of State delegations in Democratic conventions. Describing the latter's use from experience, Senator Harry F. Byrd said, "under the unit rule, it is possible . . . for an actual minority to control nominations". He added: "The unit rule gives great power to the big-city machines such as those in the populous areas of New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois and California."

To solve this problem Mr. Coudert proposes that Electors, who correspond to Senators and Representatives, be chosen in the same way their counterparts in Congress are chosen. Under this plan two Electors in each State, corresponding to its Senators, would be elected at-large; and the remainder, corresponding to its members of the House (which range among States from one to 43, according to population), would be elected in Congressional Districts, or at-large in those few cases where Congressmen are so elected. Chosen by this method — the district system — the whole body of Electors would bear a political complexion almost identical to that of a whole Congress sitting in joint session. Any President so chosen would have to look for re-election to exactly the same *form* of constituency as that of the whole Congress.

The district system for Electors had distinguished support in the early days of our country. It was "the mode which was mostly, if not exclusively, in view when the Constitution was framed and adopted", according to Lucius Wilmerding, Jr., in *Political Science Quarterly* of March, 1949. "It was also the mode", he adds, "which was advocated after some experience with the Constitution by Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Gallatin, James A. Bayard, J. Q. Adams, Van Buren, Benton, Webster, Story and many others."

The necessity for Presidential Electors is firmly rooted in the very form and structure of the American political system. The Constitutional provision for the institution of Electors does two supremely important things:

1. By excluding Senators and Representatives from the office of Elector, it separates executive and legislative powers at the source, a cardinal principle of the American political system;

2. By establishing Electors in exact correspondence to Senators and Representatives, the whole body of them — in the election of the President — combine the *federal-national* principles on which American government is founded. That is, *equality* of the States in the Senate and *inequality* of the States in the House of Representatives according to inequalities of population.

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HOWEVER, by failing to provide a uniform method for choosing Electors, the Founders left the opening into which others have driven the wedge of the present at-large method of choosing them. It was this failure, through oversight, lack of foresight, or political infeasibility at the time, which has permitted the unbalancing of the carefully balanced and neatly articulated political system they built for us.

During the early days of the Republic the Electors were chosen in a variety of ways. Sometimes by the legislatures, sometimes at-large, but most often under the district system. However, the at-large or general ticket system for Electors spread rapidly with the rise of the party system in the early 1800's — an unforeseen development. Political leaders of the dominant party in the legislatures forced the change in order to control the State's full power in electing the President. The more power they could wield in his election the more influence they could exert on his Administration. And so it has remained to this day.

Adoption of the Coudert amendment would change the inequitable system now used and would have the following revolutionary but beneficial political effects:

1. Divide each State's power in the election of a President among its political parties on exactly the same basis that its Congressional power is divided among them. Thus national parties would have Presidential power commensurate with their Congressional power — an ideal situation.

2. Remove the ideological grounds for any conflict between the President and Congress by reducing the power of pressure groups over the White House to the level of their weight in the election of the Congress. With the same *form* of constituency, the President and the Congress would wear much the same political complexion.

3. Give to both large and small States their proper weight, properly divided between their parties, in the election of a President.

4. Break up the large bloc of electoral votes of the big-city States which, because they exist and turn on statewide pluralities, now dominate the nomination of candidates for the Presidency. Also make eligible for nomination qualified men from the smaller States. For instance, the division of New York's 45 electoral votes would be close to 50-50.

THE major effect of the Coudert amendment would be on the conduct of the Presidency. The change it would bring in the source and quantity of his political nourishment would necessarily affect the political attitudes of any President or would-be President. At the present time the 531 political roots (Electors) of the White House are consolidated into what might be called "trunk-roots", varying in size from three diameters to 45 (Nevada has 3 electoral votes, New York 45).

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Nine of the largest of these trunk-roots run from States having metropolitan cities of more than a half-million people and have a total of 204 diameters (Electors) of the 531, or just 62 less than the 266 necessary for a President to survive politically. With so much nourishment from so few sources, any President would regard them with great tenderness. (Certainly, Roosevelt felt this way about New York.) To do otherwise, would be to violate the first principle of political action — to win office and keep it.

The Coudert amendment would merely unbind the trunk-roots to the White House and liberate the members to their natural equality. Ninety-six of them would run *two each* (i.e., the two electors chosen at-large) from each of the 48 States. The nourishment these would bring would remain unchanged in quality from that which they now bring as members of the trunk-roots. The other 435 political roots of the Presidency would run *one each* from the Congressional Districts.

The political nourishment these separated roots would bring to the White House would vary considerably from that which arose in the trunk-roots of which they were members. With each of them dependent on a voting plurality at its own source — the Congressional District — the change in quality would be substantial, to say the least.

Thus, the roots of the White House, paralleling those of the Congress, would provide the President with the same political nourishment on which the members of Congress have to subsist in order to stay in office. He, necessarily, would have to live politically as their majorities live. The new diet would not contain any imported left-wing vitamins.

WITH THE ELECTORAL power of the big-city states divided between the parties, the nominating conventions would differ sharply from those witnessed by the television watchers last summer. They would see conventions reach conclusions under the *influence* of leaders with followers rather than at the *dictation* of bosses with minions.

In Presidential campaigns under the Coudert amendment, both parties would aim at winning somewhat more than half of the State Electors and a majority of the District Electors. The doubtful Districts are far more numerous, diversified and widely scattered than the doubtful States, and would be the principal objectives of campaign strategists. No longer would New York be the *sine qua non* of party victory.

In conclusion, it would not be too much to predict that future Presidential Elections held under this reformed system would ensure the triumph of truly American tickets for many years to come. Indeed one prophesy may safely be ventured: under such a system, there would loom no danger that Mr. Walter Reuther, head of CIO and already mentioned as a possible contender, could be elected President.

Mr. Williams, born and raised in the Carolinas, went to New York in the late Twenties where he joined and worked for the Republican Party. This year he campaigned for Eisenhower in the South.

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HUMAN EVENTS

FRANK C. HANIGHEN, *Editor* FRANK CHODOROV, *Associate Editor*

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Time for a Change: The popular comment on Ike and his appointments today is, "Well, give the guy a chance." That is precisely what one should try to do — in regard to these controversial selections. For we suspect that the General himself has had little to do with the choices, leaving them to subordinates. The danger is that when inauguration is over and the General mounts the driver's seat, he may not enjoy much of a "chance" to really guide the machine. For most of the men (without whom he could not operate the complicated Executive branch) will have been chosen; and too many of them may not prove the type which those who voted for Ike hoped to see in Government. Now, not after January 21, is the time to "give the guy a chance", by warning him.

The preliminaries fail to forecast the "change" voted at the polls last month. Indeed, one remark heard frequently here in recent weeks is that, despite the slogan "time for a change", the portrait gallery of the incoming Administration is unfortunately reminiscent of that of the departing Truman Administration. We refer less to the Cabinet than to the lower echelon appointments which are usually the more important. For instance, last week this column noted that Mr. Bernard Gladieux, a former aide of Henry Wallace, was mentioned for the post of head of the Civil Service Commission. This week, it is revealed that *pro tempore*, Gladieux has been retained to help the new commission established, by Eisenhower's command, to "streamline" the bureaucracy.

The three heads of the streamlining commission are rather indicative. There is Nelson Rockefeller, prominent in the Roosevelt Administration during the war, exponent of the New Deal boondoggling in Latin America. Then there is the General's brother, Dr. Milton Eisenhower, once a member of Henry Wallace's team in the Department of Agriculture in the Thirties — in those days, prominent in the Triple-A operation, known as "plowing under the pigs". Finally, the third member is Dr. Arthur S. Flemming. *Who's Who* records the long list of Roosevelt Administration roles filled by the educator from Ohio. Also, he served on the Civil Service Commission since 1939. Yesterday, we checked up on Flemming with a number of staff members of the Commission, old hands who know well the agency and its history. They describe Flemming as a New Dealer, and as the man largely responsible for making more cumbrous and complicated the regulation of the whole bureaucracy.

Finally, as we go to press, we hear that Mr. John J. Corson is to have a hand in this reorganization process. *Who's Who* gives a long list of the various New Deal agencies in which Mr. Corson has served.

Indeed, it's time for a change.

MacArthur: The amicable and potentially constructive exchange of telegrams between Ike and Mac has stirred the country. It arose from remarks made by the latter to the meeting of the National Association of Manufacturers last week. Since MacArthur disclosed no details of his plan for victory, there has been much speculation in the Capital about what he is driving at.

Some observers suggest that MacArthur probably has in mind a full-fledged assault on the enemy to drive them beyond the Yalu. When MacArthur remarked that the situation had altered considerably since he left that theater about eighteen months ago, it is possible he had in mind the fact of the enemy's

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air power build-up since that time. Hence, it is assumed here that the MacArthur plan envisages an American "air build-up" and a campaign depending on overwhelming air superiority. Military observers here comment that any aggressive ground and naval action (if the former Far East commander is thinking of another Inchon venture) would be hopeless without "taking out" the enemy air force first.

Much nonsensical comment has appeared in the press about MacArthur's sudden and unexpected statement, together with apocryphal versions of why MacArthur did not come out for Ike in the campaign. The real story of MacArthur's abstention, as we get it from those who know, is quite simple. When he left the convention, he said he was out of politics. Numerous emissaries from the Eisenhower camp sought to see him and urge him to speak. Many rumors were afloat that MacArthur wanted this or that deal, this or that promise of a post. We believe these are completely false. MacArthur would only appear on the political scene if Eisenhower asked him to do so, personally. The former Far Eastern commander had acquired a quite understandable dislike for intermediaries.

Eisenhower had phoned former President Herbert Hoover and asked him to come out; and the latter at once agreed to do so. If Eisenhower had done the same for MacArthur, there is little doubt among those who know him that the General in the Waldorf would just as readily have acceded. Why Ike failed to do so is another story — revelation of which would serve no useful purpose now. That's about all there is to it.

Straws from the South: Governor James F. Byrnes in a speech at Columbia, S.C., on December 5, made two points which indicate that the great Southern leader has prominently in mind fundamental necessities of any party realignment. According to the A.P. (December 5), he recommended that South Carolinians recognize "their affinity with the agricultural and small town areas of the North, normally Republican", and also recognize that they have nothing in common with the Democratic Party's metropolitan area political bosses who try only "to satisfy the minority groups who keep them in office". The Governor further suggested to the Carolina Democrats who supported Eisenhower that they "keep away from the State Republican party unless the National Republican party can find some way of rebuilding the State party". Finally, he recommended that they decide "later" whether to "align" with the Republicans of the North either under that name or under a new name.

In Washington, observers believe that there is no chance that the GOP National Committee will "rebuild" the GOP state parties in the South. That step, it is remarked, would only come after realignment of the two parties in the Congress, the merging and joint organization of Congress by the two parties as described in the HUMAN EVENTS article (November 19) "Conservatives Can Stay in Power If —", by J. Harvie Williams, who contributes this week's piece.

The Austerity Pattern: The Defense Electric Power Administration has decreed a cut in the use of electric power by plants operating in Washington State, and in parts of Oregon, Idaho and Montana. A shortage of water in that area has lowered the power output of the hydro-electric dams. On November 1, and until nature supplies higher water levels in the rivers, some of the Northwest's big aluminum plants had to curtail operations, and household users were asked to go easy on the use of light and electric-power appliances. In short, this is an "austerity" order — and it came from a government that professes to be able to manage the economy.

When the government moved in on our electric power business years ago, engineers pointed out that dependence on water fall for electricity was risky; a steam plant is more reliable, they said. The government answered the objection, in the case of the TVA, by saying that it was not going into the power business in competition with private suppliers (which would be unconstitutional), that it was interested only in flood control, and would use the waterfall from the dams to make electricity as a by-product. This, the bureaucrats said, would provide a "yardstick" for the price that should be charged by private companies for their electricity. Time came, however, when the TVA asked Congress for an appropriation for

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a steam plant; the subsidized electricity from the TVA had increased the use of it, of course, and the users were demanding more cheap power than the dams could at all times provide.

The Defense Electric Power Administration has not as yet asked the taxpayers of the country for a steam plant to make subsidized electricity for the Northwest. In time it will, for the Northwest is getting used to what should be called public graft, and is building an economy on it. It can be assumed that even if DEPA supplements the dams with steam plants, the attractiveness of partially free electricity will expand its use faster than the government can supply it, and new "austerity" measures will have to be resorted to. "Austerity" is a recurrent characteristic of a controlled or managed economy.

In the present instance, private electric power companies have made their contribution to the shortage of electricity. Rather than fight the government on principle, they have made a deal with it to buy the electricity and act only as deliverers. The manufacture of electricity is the most expensive part of the business, the profit is in bringing it to the users. So, the companies were quite willing to let the government take over the costly operation, reserving the "gravy" for themselves. Of course, in due time the government will take over the delivery lines (or tax them out of business); in the meantime, the private companies are paying dividends, at the taxpayers' expense.

In the Prints: An outstanding article of the fortnight is "Facing Both Ways in Germany", by Freda Utley, author of the best-seller *The China Story* (Henry Regnery Company, 1951), which appears in *The Freeman*, issue of December 15. A devastating exposé of the policy of our proconsuls in Germany.

The Washington *Times Herald*, in an editorial on December 10, has soberly and factually explained why the appointment of Mr. Martin Durkin to the post of Secretary of Labor is a bad appointment, based on his record as state director of labor in Illinois in the Thirties and Forties. "What Mr. Durkin did in the Illinois department of labor hardly qualifies him to be a top adviser of the President of the United States", concludes the newspaper.

Revisionism: In this week, the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we call attention to a passage in the new edition of *The Court Historians Versus Revisionism*, a pamphlet by Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes, distinguished historian. The author appraises the role of Cordell Hull, whose policies laid the ground work for that disaster, as follows:

"It is probable that no man in the history of the United States, with the possible exception of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., was less fitted by knowledge, experience and temperament to be Secretary of State. Mr. Hull had little knowledge of history, world affairs, or diplomatic procedure. He had slight grasp of the realities in international affairs or diplomatic methods.

"He was, perhaps, the classic example in all history of the Pharisee in dealing with international relations. Out of his ignorance of history, world affairs and diplomatic procedure he built up a mental world of more or less complete fantasy in regard to the actual policies and activities of nations and their diplomatic representatives, including the United States. He then proceeded to judge the methods, acts and proposals of foreign countries according to these unreal and fantastic standards — what have been called 'Hull's platitudes, beatitudes and banalities'. If they failed to measure up to these, Hull then tended to assail such countries with all the vigor and animus of a Tennessee feudist, especially if they were countries like Germany, Italy and Japan, which Hull did not like.

"Indeed, one eminent historian has not unfairly likened Hull to 'Devil Anse' Hatfield fitted out with pince-nez eye glasses and a silk cord. In fact, 'Old Anse' might have blushed if he had listened in on one of Hull's characteristic beratings of subordinates whose actions had displeased him or, especially, his comments to the Japanese representatives on the afternoon of Pearl Harbor Day when they handed Hull what was, considering the background and circumstances, an amazingly accurate historical account of the nature and results of Roosevelt-Hull foreign policy as it affected Japan."

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Turbulent Era: *A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904-1905*, by Joseph C. Grew. Edited by Walter Johnson. Two volumes, illustrated. Boston. Houghton, Mifflin Company. $15.00. Reviewed by Burton Rascoe.

A footnote of one of these curiously fascinating and yet somehow exasperating volumes relates that Mr. Grew resigned as Under-Secretary of State because "he saw that an inner group was making the major decisions and that he was not being consulted".

That is about all that anyone is ever likely to get out of Joe Grew, while he is alive, about the battle he fought and lost against the pro-Soviet bloc in the State Department. Grew is a self-disciplined and loyal foreign service officer and gentleman. It is necessary to read these memoirs with care in order to understand him and to see why that footnote is all he will give us of the story we have been so eagerly waiting to read.

Grew's true stature emerges in impressive but almost tortuously circuitous fashion from these cautiously selected, edited, expurgated and "cleared" (by the State Department) excerpts from 168 typewritten volumes of diaries, letters, dispatches and reports which cover four decades in the official and social life of a career diplomat.

Grew opined that Theodore Roosevelt had the right idea, "Speak softly but carry a big stick". His cousin, Franklin, always did precisely the opposite. He adopted a belligerent tone and chose to lecture Japan on moral issues at times when Japanese-American relations were the most peaceful and when the hotbloods of the military were subdued by the pacific statesmen who were closest to the Emperor. At the same time Roosevelt transferred part of the Pacific fleet to the Atlantic, talked disarmament and failed to follow bluster with firmness.

Since the Japanese militarists had come to expect alternate belligerency and gestures of friendship from the White House, Grew warned in January, 1941, and repeatedly through June, that it was common talk in Tokyo that the militarists were waiting for a new anti-Japanese outburst from Washington and would seize the occasion to pull *a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor*. Grew begged Roosevelt to keep the Pacific fleet and garrisons on the alert, not to underestimate the Japanese power and will to fight a suicidal war, and to engage in no more provocations without some action to show we meant business. But the ambassador received no instructions nor, indeed, any news as to what was going on in Washington.

What had happened, of course, was that Hitler had broken his pact with Stalin on June 22 and this had been the signal for the Communist and pro-Soviet functionaries in the U.S. Government, who had been rampant isolationists since September, 1939, to go all out for immediate war against the Axis powers, which included Japan. Russian priorities in Lend-Lease would immediately start billions of dollars worth of war materials flowing to Vladivostok (the "dagger pointed at Japan") as well as to Moscow through Murmansk. And, the interventionists, who had been unable to provoke an act of war out of Hitler by all aid "short of war" to the Allies, immediately rediscovered that the "heroic Chiang Kai-shek" was alone defending "democracy" against Japanese "fascist aggression" and that we must drive the Japs from the Asiatic mainland.

Grew knew from 1933 on that the Kremlin was provoking the conflict between China and Japan and that every zigzag change in our official policy toward Japan coincided with the zigzags of Stalinist propaganda for Soviet aims. And he was wise and right in every recommendation and prediction he made to Roosevelt and Hull. But he also knew that he had only to advise to see precisely the opposite action taken and so, at last could only record glumly in his diary on May 19, 1945:

". . . the result will be merely the transfer of totalitarian power from Germany and Japan to Soviet Russia . . ."

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